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SUCCESS STORY

Giving Women the Edge in Energy

USAID's Afghan Energy Capacity Building project supports development of women's capacity to lead Afghanistan's energy future



Photo: USAID/AECB

Engineer Shanaz, Solar Energy Director at MEW, discussing her goals with a colleague at a leadership course held at MEW.

Because of their training under USAID's Afghan Energy Capacity Building project, more than 80 women at the Ministry of Energy and Water increased their civil service rating and received salary increases.

At the Afghanistan's Ministry of Energy and Water (MEW), women were not moving up in the ranks, mostly due to a lack of human capacity building opportunities. USAID created and funded the Afghan Energy Capacity Building Project (AECB), which has empowered more than 100 MEW women employees, giving them the capacity to thrive in what was once an entirely male-dominated ministry. The MEW's Vocational Training Center's Instructors and female students have also benefitted from the AECB training.

The AECB Program provided English training and followed up with computer training at a reasonable pace that let the women learn both subjects, with minimal or no impact on their job duties. Many of the women were also encouraged to take basic management and technical courses and attend an overview course on the Afghan power sector. As a result, approximately 80 women at MEW who completed the training have increased their civil service rating and received salary increases. Four have been promoted, and one became a Deputy Department Director.

At the MEW Vocational Training Center, two women were promoted from assistant instructors to fully accredited instructors after completing technical training courses. To help increase women's enrollment in the engineering school at Kabul Polytechnic University, 19 female students participated in a power sector intern program that included English and computer instruction and provided exposure to the energy sector through utility site visits.

"After the training I had a stronger vision of where I want to be in five years as a leader in the Energy Sector," said Madam Zia Gul Saljuki, Director of Planning at Ministry of Energy and Water.

The AECB project recently offered a series of leadership and teambuilding workshops designed to inspire participants to be more effective in their positions and to strengthen women's ability to provide each other with career support. Women graduates of the program have reported increased confidence, a greater participation in meetings, a clearer sense of their career vision and goals, better stress management skills, and more risk-taking.